Missouri Department of Mental Health
Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse

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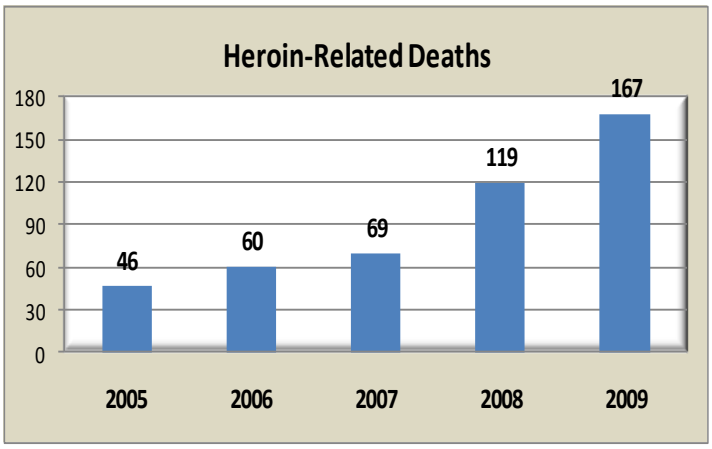
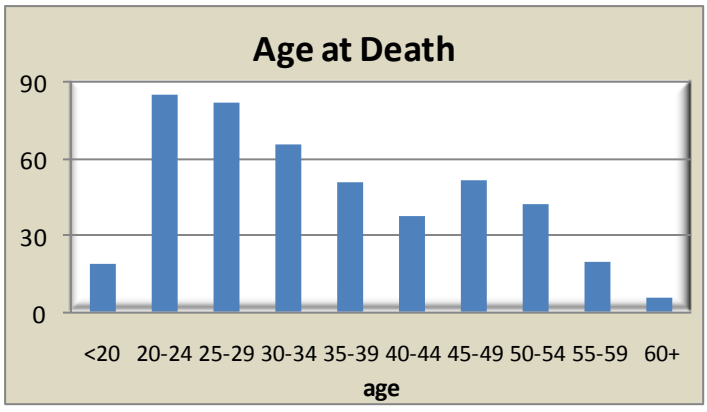
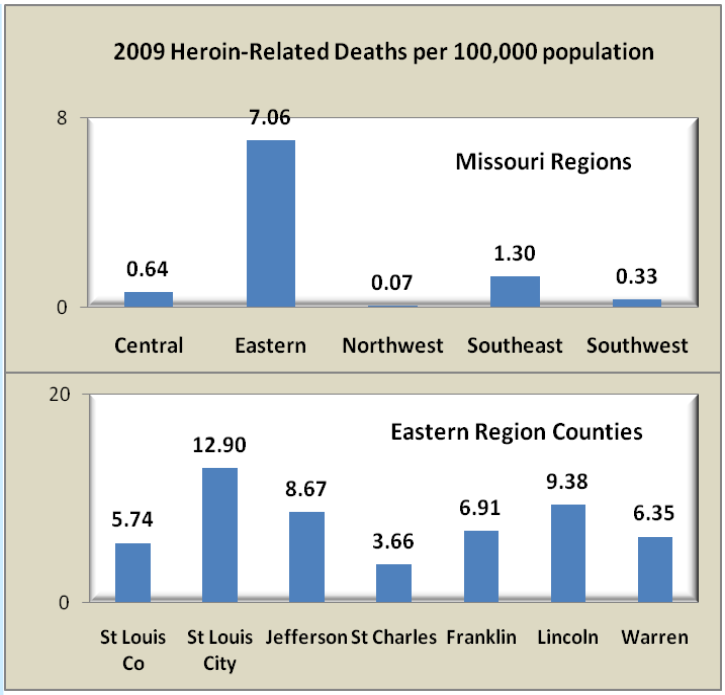
Heroin-Related Deaths in Missouri

Heroin-Related Deaths on the Rise: Heroin-related deaths in Missouri have been increasing in recent years. Between 2005 and 2009, 461 deaths in Missouri have involved heroin use.[1] This includes drug overdoses as well as other causes of death where heroin use may have been a contributing factor.



Demographics: Average age at death for Missouri's heroin-related deaths is 35 years. Mid– to late twenties is common. Caucasian males make up the majority of Missouri's heroin-related deaths—representing 67 percent of those deaths. African-American males account for 16 percent. Caucasian and African-American females represent another 14 percent and 2 percent, respectively. African-Americans whose death was related to heroin use tend to be somewhat older compared to Caucasians with similar deaths. The average age for Caucasian heroin-related deaths is 34 years as compared to 42 years for African-Americans. Substance abuse treatment data suggests that there is no difference in average age of first use for the two racial groups.





An Eastern Region Phenomenon: Heroin-related deaths are impacting Missouri's Eastern region at a much greater rate than other regions in the state. In 2009, 89 percent of Missouri's heroin-related deaths were for Eastern region residents. Among Eastern region counties, St. Louis city has the highest rate of heroin-related deaths. In 2009, St. Louis city had 12.9 heroin-related deaths per 100,000 population. In comparison, Jackson county, which includes the majority of Kansas City, in the Northwest region had only 0.14 heroin-related deaths per 100,000 population. The high rates of heroin-related deaths are not limited to Eastern region's urban areas. Suburban and rural areas have been impacted as well. St. Francois county in southeastern Missouri and Lincoln and Jefferson counties in eastern Missouri also have high rates of heroin-related deaths. The U.S. Department of Justice reports that Mexican drug trafficking organizations, with connections in Chicago, are the principal transporters of heroin to the area.[2] Chicago is the primary distribution center for eastern Missouri's heroin. White powder heroin ("*China*") originating from South America is the dominant type of heroin sold in the region although Mexican black tar heroin is also available. Purity levels of Mexican heroin have been on the rise in recent years and are becoming more comparable to that of South American heroin.[3]

Sources:
[1]Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Section of Epidemiology for Public Health Practices, Bureau of Health Informatics.
[2]Midwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Drug Market Analysis. U.S. Department of Justice (May 2007).
[3]National Drug Threat Assessment 2010. U.S. Department of Justice. National Drug Intelligence Center (February 2010).

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